

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**November 16, 2009**

The regular meeting of the Fitchburg School Committee was held at Memorial Middle School on November 16, 2009. Mayor Lisa Wong, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Present

Mayor Lisa Wong, Chairperson  
Mr. James Connors  
Mr. Glen Capone  
Ms. Sally Cragin  
Mr. Thomas Rousseau  
Mr. Peter Stephens

Absent

Mr. James Reynolds

Also Present (Administration/Staff)

Mr. Andre Ravenelle, Superintendent                      Mrs. Dianne Reardon, Recording  
Ms. Paula Giaquinto, Assistant Superintendent      Secretary  
Mr. Robert Jokela, Business Manager  
Ms. Sandy Lor, Student Representative to the School Committee

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Chairperson/Mayor Lisa Wong opened the meeting and three Fitchburg High School students, Alex, Abby and Kevin, led the pledge of allegiance.

**2. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON AGENDA**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Connors, to approve the minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting of November 2, 2009. The motion was approved, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

**4. REPORTS AND/OR COMMENTS FROM STUDENT/ SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

➤ School Committee Chair Report – Mayor Wong

There was nothing to report this evening.

➤ Building Needs Subcommittee – Sally Cragin

Ms. Cragin spoke about the subcommittee meeting that was held on November 12, 2009, in the evening, which brought new interest to the committee. She added that the roof work at Memorial and Longsjö is complete, with inside work to be done.

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Also, there will be gutter work done at South Street. The Statements of Interest for the MSBA grants were submitted on November 12<sup>th</sup> (due date was November 13<sup>th</sup>). The School Department Capital Plan will be presented to the city capital commission on December 15<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Wong explained the capital commission and how it has not been in effect since the early 1980s. There are roads, playgrounds, parks, buildings and schools involved. The commission has been revived and is comprised of citizens. The commission has been meeting for approximately six months, working with each department to get a handle on all capital needs. Eventually, the commission will be looking into funding sources for these needs.

Ms. Cragin announced that the Springfield Facilities Manager, Joe Forrest, will be coming out to speak to city and school administrators this Friday. Mr. Jokela set this meeting up. This is to look into energy management. There will be a small meeting in December with area facility managers to see where everyone stands on energy management and to compare notes. Also, they will be discussing the finance of this issue.

Ms. Cragin spoke about the softball dugout roofs and presented Abby Capone, who initiated this project for Girl Scouts.

Ms. Capone addressed the committee and explained the basis for her project. She is also initiating a scholarship fund for under-privileged Lassie League girls. Unitil has dug all the holes for free. Monty Tech masonry department set the holes and the seniors set the concrete in the holes. There is extra dirt in the dugout, which is being cleaned out now. Monty Tech is now constructing the roofs. Sandy Thibault is donating wood from the Warning Track. The estimated cost is \$3,000, and she has raised approximately \$700.00 from donors. The final cost will be determined after the wood is donated. The checks need to be sent to Glenn/Cinda Capone, 628 Franklin Rd., Fitchburg, MA, or call 978-345-6995, if anyone wants to donate for the softball roofs and/or the scholarship fund.

Ms. Wong complimented Ms. Capone for her diligent work on these two projects.

Mr. Capone added that Unitil, Graves Concrete and Monty Tech have been wonderful regarding this project.

Ms. Cragin mentioned that this project is a great project and being led by a student is wonderful.

➤ Crocker Field Restoration Committee – Peter Stephens

Mr. Stephens reported that the roof at Crocker Field is still being worked on. Also, there will be additional stands from Assumption College that will be placed at Crocker Field for the Thanksgiving game.

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➤ Finance Subcommittee – Thomas Rousseau

Mr. Rousseau spoke on the meeting held this evening. The subcommittee recommends approval of the warrant on tonight's agenda. There were also minutes from the previous meeting that were submitted to the full committee. He spoke about the budget calendar that will be presented this evening during the Superintendent's report. Mr. Jokela notified the committee that none of the recent state cuts will have any impact on our school budget for this fiscal year.

Mr. Stephens asked about the substitute teacher note, regarding not being able to hire any new substitutes.

Mr. Ravenelle explained the problems with the substitute list. Fitchburg is the lowest paying district in the area by as much as \$20.00/day. The issue with adding more names on substitute list and they work one day, they are able to collect unemployment. The Human Resource director is trying to keep the list as crisp as they can. There is some clerical clean up work that needs to be done. We are adding another fourteen people today, and managing the list.

Mr. Stephens asked if the district is notified if someone is trying to collect unemployment.

Mr. Ravenelle answered yes, and Heather Richards attends all these hearings. She has been to a dozen or more in the past months. Mr. Ravenelle added that there was a meeting this morning regarding all pending professional development in the next month, as some of this may not be offered. We are trying to control the cost of substitutes. We are trying to form a list of candidates also. We are addressing all these issues. A lot of our grants that we receive require professional development, which is also an issue.

Mr. Connors asked what the per diem for a substitute is.

Mr. Ravenelle replied \$65.00/day. Monty Tech is \$90.00 and most districts are \$85.00. In other districts, after a number of days, it goes up to \$100.00 a day. We don't do any of that.

Mr. Connors asked what the requirements to be a substitute teacher in the city of Fitchburg were.

Ms. Giaquinto answered that formerly it was a willing participant. The requirements have changed, which means that there should be a bachelor's degree and teacher credentials. We still do hire people without these requirements since we need them, however these are the requirements.

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Mr. Ravenelle explained the issue with the substitute accounts. He spoke of the difficulty in the control of the substitute accounts.

Mr. Connors added that teachers are entitled to bereavement, sick and personal days that are available to them.

Mr. Ravenelle explained that there is no widespread abuse found in the district.

Ms. Wong asked for this to remain a topic for the finance subcommittee.

➤ Negotiations Subcommittee – Mayor Wong

Ms. Wong reported that negotiations are ongoing with various unions.

➤ Policy Subcommittee – Glen Capone

Mr. Capone had nothing to report.

➤ Strategic Planning Task Force – Thomas Rousseau

Mr. Rousseau reported that the Superintendent will discuss his goals this evening.

➤ School Marketing Committee – Sally Cragin

Ms. Cragin announced that the Marketing Subcommittee met last Tuesday and it was a productive meeting. They will hopefully begin meeting twice monthly, alternating times between afternoon and early evening times. The media was analyzed by the committee. There was also discussion about long and short term projects. One long term project is a handout that will be given out to all students in Fitchburg, including parochial and private schools. This will be a handout spelling out all summer activities. This should also be on the city and school website. Ms. Cragin asked the agencies to get in touch with Central Office if they know their schedules for the summer. Possibly, Mr. Cordio at Fitchburg High School will have students do the graphic arts for this handout. This handout will go home with students by the first week of June.

Ms. Cragin mentioned the Thanksgiving baskets being put together by the Longsjo Middle School. Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, the students will be presenting these baskets. Ms. Cragin asked the media to focus on this event and others presented by the schools. We are trying to shed a light on what the public needs to see and know. The next meeting is December 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at Central Office. This is an open meeting for anyone interested.

➤ Student Report – Sandy Lor

Ms. Lor reported that there were 25 new inductees into the National Honor Society. Ms. Lor read a list of projects from the National Honor Society members.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

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Ms. Cragin spoke about Fitchburg's Got Talent, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, at the Fitchburg Public Library. This is for children aged 4 to 10. This is a fundraiser for the Fitchburg Public Library. Rehearsal date is December 2<sup>nd</sup>. There are applications at the library.

**6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Ms. Wong drew attention to the new ethics law and the continuation of ensuring this law is abided by.

**7. COMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Wong spoke about the Breakfast for the Bands on November 22<sup>nd</sup> at Leominster High School, beginning at 8:00 am. Also, the Thanksgiving Day game will be at Crocker Field at 10:00 am. There has been no mayoral bet set at this time, but this will be a "double or nothing", since the ice storm interrupted the challenge of last year.

Ms. Wong drew attention to the H1N1 vaccine clinic. She directed people to go to the city website [www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us](http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us). Multiple locations and dates are available. Fitchburg and Gardner are the only ones having these clinics. Also, Board of Health is 978-345-9582.

Mr. Rousseau spoke about speaking at an FSC sponsored civic engagement event. There could be the development of a skills bank for people in the community. Also, spoke about engaging college students into these community projects.

Mr. Rousseau drew attention to an article on bullying. This was mentioned in the strategic plan. It appears that legislators have submitted legislation regarding this issue.

**8. SUPERINTENDENT'S PRESENTATIONS:**

➤ Recognitions:

• Superintendent's Award

Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has a dinner that recognizes the top two students in the district. Mr. Ravenelle recognized Kevin Chavez and Alex Hanno as the top two students in the district. Mr. Ravenelle read the two students' achievements.

Mr. Masciarelli honored the two students and spoke of their achievements.

The two students thanked the School Committee for the recognition.

Ms. Cragin asked the students to speak to a 6, 8, 12 and 14 year old student, regarding aspirations of theirs.

The students spoke about the fundamentals of their home life and extracurricular activities. They spoke of the great teachers at the high school. They

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added that there is great support at the high school. You have to put work into it, but you will get it back. They added to find something you are passionate about.

➤ Communication:

- Donation – Fitchburg High School

Mr. Ravenelle spoke about the donation from Jim Laakso, graduate of FHS, class of 1999.

- Washington, DC Field Trip

Ms. Jennifer Fisher addressed the committee regarding the Washington, DC field trip. She presented the information to the committee and added that they will be attending a Nationals game next year.

Mr. Capone commented on how wonderful this trip is. He asked if there was any information regarding fundraising opportunities.

Ms. Fisher answered that each school is doing their own fundraising. She will be investigating fundraising options with Mr. Jokela. There may be different fundraising events planned throughout the year. There needs to be approval for planning before any fundraising can occur.

Ms. Lor commented on how wonderful this trip was.

- Superintendent's Goals

Mr. Ravenelle drew attention to a handout that the members had.

Mr. Rousseau spoke on the fact that he distributed this handout at the last meeting as a draft. He commented on his discussion with the Superintendent.

Ms. Wong made a comment that, when these goals were put together, they were purposely linked together. Remember that the school committee also put down goals. She would like to see how we could bring these goals together on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Wong complimented Mr. Rousseau for the work he has done on this project.

Ms. Cragin found it helpful to simplify these issues. She added that she finds herself reflecting on the strategic plan frequently.

➤ Discussion Items:

- RTTT

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the meeting that was attended by himself, Ms. Giaquinto, Mr. Jokela and Mr. Stephens. This was a bringing together of urban school

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districts. These are "race to the top" funds, which is stimulus money. Everyone is still waiting to hear the number of stimulus funds and how it will be apportioned.

Mr. Jokela spoke on the funding that might be eligible in Massachusetts.

Ms. Giaquinto spoke on some of the requirements of this stimulus money. The first round of proposals for RTTT funds must be submitted before December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Kaake-Smith spoke on the meeting guidelines and the many documents involved.

➤ Budget Items:

- Grants – Kate Martin

Ms. Martin presented the nine grants, three for submission and six for acceptance.

Mr. Rousseau asked to explain the responsive classroom model and how the Care Project aligns with it.

Ms. Giaquinto explained the responsive classroom initiative.

Mr. Stephens asked if all schools would be on the Bay State Reading Initiative.

Ms. Giaquinto answered that only two schools will be on this initiative.

- Draft Budget Calendar

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the distributed budget calendar. He spoke on a survey tool that would generate some data on all opinions, so that when we come together on December 7<sup>th</sup>, there would be something to talk about. Within the strategic plan there are choices to be made. He will send a request to all committee members asking what they would like to see discussed by their fellow members. He is looking for feedback on this budget calendar and the survey tool for interests of each member.

Ms. Wong would like to see some alternatives built into the budget in case cuts might happen in April and May.

Mr. Ravenelle asked about the additional dates in April and May.

Ms. Wong suggested building in more meetings with principals and administration as well as school committee members.

Mr. Stephens would like to be kept informed of the budget process, as he is not sitting on the finance subcommittee.

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Mr. Ravenelle said that committee members could still attend the subcommittee meetings as observers. Hopefully, the committee members' priorities will be laid out by the survey process.

**9. ACTION ITEMS:**

- #09-01 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the donation for supplement academic programs to Fitchburg High School, approximate value of \$750. from James Laakso, FHS Class of 1999. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
- Mr. Capone spoke on Mr. Laakso and what a wonderful example of a student of the Fitchburg Public School district.
- Mr. Ravenelle commented on the number of donations going up recently.
- Ms. Cragin expressed her gratitude to Mr. Laakso for his generosity.
- Mr. Stephens commented on the Crocker Field roof being mainly donations also.
- Ms. Cragin expressed her thankfulness that tonight's meeting was directly for the students and she would like to see this be the case every week.
- Ms. Cragin spoke on the Fitchburg Education Foundation, which accepts donations for many projects. Mayor Wong's inaugural ball will be celebrated on January 20<sup>th</sup>, with the proceeds to benefit the Fitchburg Education Foundation.
  
- #09-02 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to allow the 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle schools to plan their Washington, DC field trip for June 6-9, 2009. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
  
- #09-03 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Capone, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to submit the following three grants entitled: Collaborative Partnerships for Student Success (CPSS); Green in the Middle: Enhancing STEM instruction at the middle school level; and Target Field Trip Grant. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
  
- #09-04 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Stephens, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the following three grants entitled: School Partnerships with the Central Massachusetts Communities of Care Project, Sprint Character Education Grant, and New England Patriots Alumni Club (NEPAC) Grant. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
  
- #09-05 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the following three collaborative grants entitled: ARRA Title II-D Technology Collaborative Grant Program – Data; K-12 Literacy Professional Development Partnerships; and Community Treatment and Services Center Grant. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.



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- #09-06 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the warrant in the amount of \$884,591.93 (live). The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

**10. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Stephens, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 pm. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

Respectfully submitted by,

André Ravenelle  
Secretary to the School Committee, and  
Superintendent of Schools

AR/dmr